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## Update on Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

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2020 is the twentieth anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, the first Security Council resolution to specifically address women, peace and security. It is also the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (on women's rights and gender equality).

However, challenges in the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda remain, despite the development of national action plans by 83 countries to date. Fragile and politically unstable contexts result in a variety of barriers to the implementation of the agenda, as well as the ongoing challenges against women's and LGBTQ2I+ rights found in multilateral forums.

Canada's current National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which covers the period 2017 to 2022, has a fiscal year that covers April 1st to March 31st.

Overseen by Global Affairs Canada, the other government partners to the Action Plan are the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Armed Forces, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Public Safety, Women and Gender Equality, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, the Department of Justice, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, and Indigenous Services.

Each of the partners has produced a departmental implementation plan, which are considered for revision each year in response to the annual progress report.

The government considers the Action Plan to be central to Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy, which also includes the Feminist International Assistance and Canadian defence policies.

The Action Plan's objectives include increasing the meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention and post-conflict situations; addressing sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, as well as sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and other

international personnel; promoting gender equality and the rights of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict settings; meeting the needs of women and girls in humanitarian settings; and improving the capacity of peace operations to advance the WPS agenda.

The current Action Plan states that progress reports are to be tabled in Parliament by the end of September each year. This year, as a result of the federal election, this was not possible. (Fixed federal election dates ensures this issue will arise regularly.)

The subsequent disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the progress report finally being tabled in early June and the advisory group, composed of government representatives, Indigenous partners, and civil society, met in late June.

The progress report provides examples of the steps being taken by the federal government to meet the Action Plan's objectives.

Examples of successful contributions in global leadership include the Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations and Canada's turn at the leadership of the WPS Chief of Defence Staff Network. There are also examples of partnerships for change that include the June 2019 Women Deliver Conference in Vancouver and Canada's contributions to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF).

Regarding the domestic implementation of the Action Plan, the progress report notes the appointment of Canada's first Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security, Jacqueline O'Neill in the summer of 2019. As well, the Action Plan has been expanded to address the experiences of Indigenous women and girls through the inclusion of Indigenous organizations and experts, as well as the departments of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs and Indigenous Services.

Difficulties continue to be posed in how best to accurately measure results and how to address the length of time necessary for some targets to demonstrate tangible results. Many of the issues being addressed are complex and, as a result, it is difficult to determine the impact of specific efforts.

Attempts have been made to provide ratings on how successful the federal government's work on the Action Plan's objectives and targets have been. The ratings are on a scale of too early to report, attention required, mostly on track, on track, and target achieved or surpassed. This effort, while appreciated, remains vague.

The next progress report, covering the period between April 1 2019 to March 31 2020, is due to be tabled in the House of Commons before the end of September of this year. As the current Action Plan covers 2017 - 2022, planning for a mid-term review has begun, although it remains in the very early stages.

The Women, Peace and Security Network - Canada has, in the past, produced publications offering civil society assessments of the progress reports. Given that the next report will be tabled within a few months, WPSN-C will respond to both reports in the fall of 2020.